

State of California
California Regional Water Quality Control Board
Colorado River Basin Region

MINUTES OF INFORMATIONAL WORKSHOP

Thursday, March 3, 2016, 9:00 a.m. to 11:11 a.m.

California Regional Water Quality Control Board
Colorado River Basin Region
73-720 Fred Waring Drive
Palm Desert, CA 92253

Call to Order

The California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Colorado River Basin Region, was called to order by Chair Ellen Way at 9:00 a.m.

Regional Water Board Members Present:

Ellen Way, Buford Crites, Tom Davis, Ed Muzik and Jayne Powell were present. (Nancy Wright and Hidali Garcia were absent).

Regional Water Board Staff Present

Jose L. Angel, Interim Executive Officer
Abdi Haile, Interim Assistant Executive Officer
John Carmona, Senior WRC Engineer
Joan Stormo, Senior. Engineering Geologist
Mary Serra, Supervising WRC Engineer
Nadim Shukry-Zeywar, Senior Environmental Scientist
Kai Dunn, Senior WRC Engineer
Maria Davydova, Environmental Scientist
Jeff Geraci, Environmental Scientist
Doug Wylie, Senior WRC Engineer

Others Present

Bruce Wilcox, Natural Resources Agency Assistant Secretary for Salton Sea
Graeme Donaldson, Imperial Irrigation District (IID) Salton Sea Program Manager
Antonio Ortega, IID Governmental Affairs Specialist
Joanna Hoff, IID
Steve Charlton, IID
Pat Cooper, Supervisor John Benoit's Office
Sara Toyoda, City of Indio
George C., Chrystal Organic
Charles Land, CDFW
Al Kalin, Imperial County Farm Bureau
Scott Stormo, Earth Systems

Diana Enriquez, Cabazon Mission Indians
Javier Aceves, Cabazon Mission Indians
Jonathon Chapman, Cabazon Mission Indians
Desi Vela, Kumeyaay Indians
Shawn Muir, 29 Palms Band of Mission Indians
Mario Perez, 29 Palms Band of Mission Indians
Holly Hunt, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)
Patrick Taber, BIA
Angel Rashid, California Colorado River Board
Lily Garcia
Darren Simon

Informational Workshop:

The purpose of the Workshop was to give the Regional Water Board informational updates on Salton Sea restoration activities, Environmental Justice and outreach and education, New River Pollution from Mexico, and Regional Water Board office performance for State Fiscal Year 2014-2015.

Chair Way stated that the Regional Water Board is handling more business than before and decided that whatever informational business it cannot handle during its regular Board meeting, those items are going to be handled during informational workshops.

Mr. Bruce Wilcox, Natural Resources Agency Assistant Secretary for Salton Sea, provided the Board with an overview of the Salton Sea's problems and his Agency's latest Management Program efforts to address those problems. He indicated the Sea is shrinking and projected to shrink more because of future water transfers. He described hydrologic models for the Sea, and said that they indicate that flows into the Sea could reduce from the current 1,000,000 acre-feet per year to 700,000 acre-feet per year once the water transfers ramp up. In 2017, the mitigation water that is currently going into the Sea as part of the water transfer agreements will stop. All of these have the potential to expose thousands of acres of playa that has highly emissive sediments. He said that the air quality problems from exposed Sea playa pose the most significant threat to public health and it is also an economic concern because it also threatens agriculture and tourism. He said that another significant problem is the Sea's loss of habitat due to increased salinity (currently approximately 58,000 ppt), which is also projected to increase at an accelerated rate in 2017 when the mitigation water stops. If nothing is done to address these problems, he said that potentially there would be more than 60,000 acres of exposed playa, which could emit as much of 20,000 tons of dust per year of fine dust, most of it being PM 10 or smaller in size, in an area that already does not meet PM 10 standards.

Mr. Wilcox also discussed selenium as another problem. He explained that selenium is a problem because it gets in the food chain and bioaccumulates. He noted that several agencies are investigating various methods of suppressing dust emissions (e.g., including using surfactants and contour plowing/surface roughening exposed ground) and evaluating how to deal with and sequester Selenium. He stated that current

Agency's Management Program is focusing on covering the exposed playa at the deltas through the implementation of the recommendations of the Governor's Salton Sea Task Force: creation in the short-term of up to 9,000 acres of shallow "fresh water" habitat areas; preparing a mid-term plan that implements up to 25,000 acres or so of shallow habitat; preparing a list of shovel-ready mitigation projects; and preparing a long-term plan. He added that it was also recommended that an outreach plan be developed and implemented. He stated that his Agency has formed various workgroups/committees (e.g., Outreach, Science, Long-term Planning workgroups), and the Regional Water Board staff is part of the Outreach and the Long-term Planning workgroups. He concluded his presentation by stating that the long-term Management Plan will be ready by the end of the year and it will evaluate, among other things, options to bring more water into the Salton Sea.

Salton Sea Update

Mr. Antonio Ortega updated the Board on the status of the Petition the IID filed with the State Water Resources Control Board. He also showed a video that IID put together to show how much Sea playa would be exposed if nothing is done about the Sea's problems. In November 2014, the IID file a petition with the State Water Board requesting the State Water Board oversee and facilitate a dialogue between key QSA stakeholders, environmental advocates, and community members to get Salton Sea restoration efforts going and come up with a realistic restoration plan and funds to implement the plan. Since the petition was filed, Mr. Ortega explained that the Governor formed the Salton Sea Task Force, which is charged with providing recommendations for the Salton Sea; and also appointed Bruce Wilcox. Further, he said that the State Water Board has held various oversight public meetings on Salton Sea restoration efforts, which has facilitated the requested discussions and made the Sea a statewide priority. He concluded by noting that the current Governor's proposed budget allocates \$80,000,000 for restoration.

Mr. Graeme Donaldson provided the Board with an update on the IID-Imperial County Salton Sea Renewable Energy Initiative. He explained that the purpose of the initiative is to assist the state in meeting its green energy goals through the development of renewable energy (mainly geothermal) in the Imperial Valley, mitigate the amount of exposed playa, promote economic growth, ensure reliable water supplies for California (protect the Quantification Settlement Agreement), and ecosystem protection and restoration. According to the IID, it will leverage funds generated by additional geothermal development that can generate up 1200 Megawatts to help finance activities for air quality management and habitat restoration. The initiative contemplates a smaller and sustainable lake and has short-term (2015-2017) goals, which consist of shovel-ready projects that can make an immediate difference; medium-term (2018-2023) goals, which include projects that will take effect once mitigation water stops; and long-term (2024+) goals, which will include projects that will sustain the goals of the Initiative for long-term human, ecosystem, and economic health. He stated that the short-term projects IID is working on are Phase 1 of the species conservation habitat plan (640 acres), 420 acres of shallow habitat at Red Hill Bay, marine habitat pilot project (solar ponds), and the back-bone infrastructure needed for the Initiative. He

explained that the back-bone infrastructure relies on agricultural drainage to address ecosystem restoration and mitigation.

Regional Water Board Outreach and Education Activities

Maria Davydova provided an update on environmental justice priorities and activities. She said that the first priority is to address water and wastewater problems in economically disadvantaged areas in our Region. In that regard she stated that she co-chairs the Environmental Justice Task Force for the Eastern Coachella Valley and attends the Imperial Valley Environmental Justice Task Force. Both task forces are based on the IVAN system: Identifying Violations Affecting Neighborhoods. She also said that staff created a webpage to assist the public in filing environmental complaints in Region 7. She said that she also attends various meetings with other partnering agencies who work on environmental issues, including meeting with Riverside County staff, who are addressing the Polancos in the eastern Coachella Valley. She also reported that she participated in the 6th Annual Environmental Health Leadership Summit and conducted outreach and education at the Summit.

Staff Report on Office Performance for SFY 14-15

Abdi Haile provided the Annual Performance Report update for the Surface Water Protection Division for Fiscal Year 2014/15. The Division consists of 3 units (NPDES, TMDL and Basin Planning). He also provided a brief description of the responsibilities of each unit. As a core regulatory program, most of the NPDES workload achievements are trackable on an annual basis and hence, are reported in the State Water Board's Annual Performance Reports. NPDES Unit staff met all, and in some cases exceeded, their performance targets. But he also noted that the State Water Board so far has developed only a few metrics for the TMDL and the Basin Planning programs, partly because they are complex, time consuming and are not amenable to annual reporting. He stated that the TMDL did not meet its performance targets for a number of reasons, including lack of available data to support TMDL delistings, and because USEPA felt in some cases (e.g., delisting of mercury) additional sampling data was needed. Nevertheless, Mr. Haile discussed all the work done by the Division staff, including the accomplishments of the TMDL, updating of the Region's Clean Water Act Section 303(d) List, which also removed seven pollutants from the list; implementation of the agricultural waivers of waste discharge requirements, and managing the Region's Non-point Source Program. He added that the Basin Planning Unit completed the Triennial Review of the Basin Plan and reviewed and provided comments on the Salt and Nutrient Management Plans for the Coachella Valley, the Morongo Valley, and Twentynine Palms; and that the Unit continued to implement the Region's Surface Ambient Water Monitoring Program.

Board member Powell inquired whether there is a specified amount of time and level of effort to conduct inspections. Mr. Angel stated that in general there is because the resources allocated by the State Water Board to the Regional Water Boards are substantively based on cost-factors (i.e., the level of time and effort that it takes to perform a particular task) and the Region's annual workplan commitments for the core regulatory programs are also based on cost factors. She also asked about whether

there is a particular number of sampling events that need to take place to delist a particular pollutant, like in the case of mercury in fish tissue, and whether staff knew about that. Mr. Angel replied that the State Water Board Policy for the CWA Section 303(d) List provides a step-wise approach to delist and one of the ways to delist does require statistical sample-size validity. Mr. Haile added that in some cases, one can use other lines of evidence to delist also and that staff did not know that USEPA was going to require additional data.

Mary Serra provided an overview of her Division's performance. She stated that the Division accomplished and/or exceeded all of its performance targets. Board Member Davis asked how the targets are set and what happens when new work comes in. Ms. Serra explained that the targets are set before the fiscal year starts. Mr. Angel stated they were exceeded not because there new cases that came in were addressed and accomplished to meet "targets." They were exceeded because staff was more efficient and effective than anticipated and because the level of effort for some of the tasks in Region 7 (e.g., inspecting septic system) in some cases is over-estimated. Ms. Serra also stated that her Division handled outreach and education activities. Chair Way asked when the Region submits to the State Water Board the performance data. Mr. Angel stated that State Water Board begins to automatically upload performance data in September.

New River Pollution Update

Chair Way stated that Mr. Angel submitted to the Board its New River update in writing and to let him know if there were any questions. There were none.

The Workshop adjourned at approximately 11:11 a.m.